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## SOME STEPS IN THE EVOLUTION OF SOCIAL OCCUPATIONS.

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It is important to recognize differences as well as likenesses in the attitudes of primitive man and the child. The simple attitudes of the savage have not been transmitted unchanged. There are differences due to a variety of causes. Transformations that took place in early racial activities have left their traces in body and mind. Time and again a changing natural and social environment demanded a breaking up of old habits and a readjustment to new conditions. During each process the physical co-ordinations originally bound up in the old activities were released to be incorporated as essential elements in new and more complex acts. New conditions, new activities, new attitudes toward life thus characterize each successive period of human culture. The earliest chapters in the history of these changes are embodied in the spontaneous activities of the child.

The presence of mental attitudes and physical co-ordinations that represent earlier stages of culture does not preclude the tendency toward later forms. Instinctive attitudes, though stronger in the child than in the adult, persist throughout life; but not even the child is so bound by instinctive activity as was the race in its earliest stages of development. Tendencies, impulses, which are the product of later periods of culture are present from a very early period in child-life. The physical co-ordinations of the child are more easily broken up than they were in remote periods of racial development. New co-ordinations are more readily made. In a word, the child, though inheriting in his physical co-ordinations and mental attitudes the traces of activities of past stages of culture, is not bound by any of them. They are present, not as an end, but as a means—a means of achieving in a brief period the point of vantage which it took the race long ages to reach. Each vantage-point that the child attains marks the giving way of old attitudes to new

ones, the releasing of former co-ordinations and a readjustment in the light of a new need.

A difference in mental attitudes which is most significant for educational purposes is one of function. The activity of the child, though as practical and as real from his own point of view as that of the adult, from the standpoint of the latter is neither practical nor real. This is due to differences in the conditions which operate in the life of the child and of the adult. Shielded from the struggle for existence, the child is free to expend his energy without regard to practical results. Energy which the race was compelled to expend in maintaining the struggle for existence in the case of the child finds a normal expression in play. But since the physical co-ordinations and emotional attitudes of the child are largely the product of the practical activities of the race during the early stages of culture, the surplus energy now, as then,<sup>1</sup> is expended in similar forms. What the savage did seriously under the necessity of hunger, the child, in obedience to his instinctive tendencies, does in a dramatic way.

Utility has no such meaning for the child as it has for the adult. That which is useful, in the sense in which the adult uses the term, the child takes as a matter of course. The useful to him is that which satisfies instincts which represent *higher needs*. The *real* attitude of the savage, fortunately, is not a normal one in child-life today. It appears only in cases of arrested development. Such cases are found in children whose development has been checked at the time when the transition from the dramatic to the scientific attitude should be made, and in children who are obliged to use the energy that should be devoted to purposes of development in performing real work.

To place the responsibilities of adult life upon the child is to arrest his development. It crystallizes the mental attitudes and the processes of life at a stage of development below that demanded by modern life. It transforms the *idealized* attitudes that should find expression in educational activities into real ones that are limited to utilitarian ends. Only by preserving freedom for the manifestation of energy in forms which are

<sup>1</sup> KATHARINE E. DOPP, *The Place of Industries in Elementary Education*, pp. 24-6.

not real in the sense of the adult, can we raise the individual to the plane where his real attitudes are in harmony with our highest standards of life. Only by allowing the child to express his ideals in dramatic forms, can his activities be articulated to those of modern society.

That primitive man acquired more skill than the child is not strange. He had need of more. Man early learned that the price of carelessness or lack of skill was apt to be the loss of a limb, if not of life itself. This fact acted as a powerful incentive in the development of skilful workmanship. The conservatism of savagery was such that little change was made in processes during many generations. The skill which the savage acquired in his youth was of a kind that he needed until the day of his death. A brief period of plasticity was all that was then required in order to lay the basis for the several necessary varieties of skill. It was more important at that time to train the youth to become self-supporting at an early age than to secure conditions for his future development. Motives to advance were never less powerful, while motives to engage in practical activity were never so great.

The conditions which affect the life of the child are very different. Society has made provision for the care of the child and is endeavoring to set aside the period of adolescence as well as that of infancy and childhood for preparing the individual to meet the demands of later years. This social habit is undoubtedly a wise one, since it tends to prolong the period of plasticity, the period during which the basis for future knowledge and skill must be laid.

The need of knowledge and skill is everywhere manifest. Never has there been so great a demand for varied and highly developed skill as at the present moment. Never has there been so great a need of ability to adjust oneself to a changing environment, or to take the initiative in inaugurating a change. In private life as well as in every department of public life there is a growing consciousness of a need of an insight into the fundamental processes of the natural, physical, and social sciences. In many places there is likewise a dawning consciousness of a

need of an insight into the principles of art. Such insight is impossible without a rich background of experience. The most favorable time for acquiring this experience, for laying the foundation for the skill required in adult life, is during the years of infancy and childhood. The most favorable method is not that which directs energy in such a way as to secure skill in a limited number of processes, but that which subordinates present skill to present as well as to future needs.

Social occupations that call into play the various impulses of the child serve to organize energy which might otherwise remain unavailable. Primitive industries so selected and arranged as to embody a generalized history of the early development of the race are free from the conservatism of savagery. They are transformed by the scientific spirit. Through the use of such occupations, processes which represent the achievements of ages may be condensed into a program for a few short months. Such occupations afford present satisfaction, because they meet a demand of the child for a form of practical activity in keeping with his power of control. They cultivate alertness because there is ever present a need of searching for new materials, devising new processes, or applying forces in more economical ways. They cultivate concentration because they make a demand for the fusion of a variety of otherwise unrelated elements into one process with which the child, for the time being, identifies himself.

Differences in the environment of the child and the savage greatly influence the choice of materials and tools with which to work. For long ages raw materials were free to whoever cared to take the trouble to appropriate them. This is far from the case today. The appropriation of the natural resources of this country have been made with so little regard for the future that already society is awakening to the need of devising ways of restoring the loss and of preventing wasteful methods. In thickly populated regions natural resources have been appropriated to such an extent that it is difficult for the child to come into direct contact with the raw materials of production. Even where uncultivated spots abound, the restrictions placed by the

owner are such as to prevent the child from making the free use of materials that it was possible for all to make only a few generations ago. The prevalence of such conditions makes it imperative that ways be devised of providing the child with the opportunities necessary for educative purposes. It is likewise imperative that the instinctive attitude of hostility be transformed as early as possible into a sympathetic habit of dealing with natural resources.

The excursion, the field trip, the school garden, and other informal means of coming into direct contact with the earth and its raw materials present most favorable opportunities for the cultivation of habits that will insure an appreciation and a fostering care of the natural features and resources in one's environment. Where the child is denied the privilege of selecting materials of production in their natural state, he may be provided with the opportunity of observing the growth of typical forms. Such observations, supplemented by various ways of illustrating the changes that take place, may be substituted for a complete first-hand experience in selecting and preparing raw materials, where conditions are such as to deprive the child of the opportunity of securing the latter.

Under present conditions the child finds in the by-products of artificial processes many materials which it is as natural for him to use as it was for the savage to use natural products. The danger that attends their use arises only when they are made to do service for more fundamental experiences.

In respect to tools as well as materials, the child is subject to a danger from which our most remote ancestors escaped. Obligated to invent the artificial tools that they employed, there was no possibility of possessing tools representing a technique beyond the power to control. But the child finds tools ready-made. He is surrounded by them from his earliest years. A large part of his early training is in relation to the use of the simple artificial implements, tools, and utensils that are found in every home. Little danger, if any, attends the use of simple artificial devices; but when the child is allowed to use tools without regard to their function, when he is allowed to form

careless habits, and thus waste material and injure the tools, it is time to call a halt. Until the child is able to gain a practical appreciation of the significance of a tool, there is need of limiting his use of tools to those that he is able to control. There are those who would do this by simplifying the child's environment to such an extent that it would be impossible for him to make a wrong choice. Others would not simplify the environment, but would limit the child in his relations to it by the exercise of authority, or by a direct appeal to his reason or moral sense. Still others would turn the child loose upon his environment. The exclusive use of any one of these methods would no doubt tend to arrest development. The better way is a judicious use of all—a use which can be made only in the light of the facts of the particular case. Between the extreme positions of selecting everything for the child and turning him loose upon his environment there is surely a means of reconciliation. Real freedom, real growth, cannot be secured by the use of either method alone, but must come by means of securing freedom within certain limits. No doubt there is a larger place for a selected environment during infancy than in childhood, just as there is a larger place for it in childhood than in youth or adult life; but even in the earliest years there is need of the development that comes from submission to authority and from learning to let some things alone.

An account of the differences that appear in the life of the child and that of the savage is not complete until it is recognized that the child is a more social creature than the savage. This is largely due to differences in natural and social environment. For long ages the savage was obliged to face nature with only the slightest means of protecting himself from her hostile forces. There was little opportunity under such conditions for the satisfaction of the social instinct. The protected life of the child in a highly developed society, the opportunities provided for play and the development of the social arts, unite in fostering the social spirit from the earliest years. When the child enters school he is ready to establish still broader social relations. In learning the art of living with his fellow-creatures in the school-

room, he becomes less self-centered. By means of co-operative action he loses for a time his individuality in that of the group, and in so doing gradually becomes conscious of a larger self than he had known before. To enlarge the self, to lay hold of its active forces, to see its possibilities, to establish relations between the life of the child and that of the race, are important functions of education. To this end the environment of the school, the curriculum, the methods of teaching, must all contribute. Through these agencies the child may be aided in acquiring a mastery of the finest of fine arts—the art of living.

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